WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 NOVEMBER 1982

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

WCHS To Celebrate 125 Years as 'Washtenaw's Memory'

Local pioneers organized what was probably the first historical society in Michigan in 1857 at the Washtenaw County Courthouse.

Now, 125 years later, the Washtenaw County Historical Society plans a GRAND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION just across the street at the Ann Arbor Inn, 100 South Fourth Avenue at Huron, at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, November 14.

Russell Bidlack, U-M dean of library science and a past-president of WCHS, will speak on "The Amazing Ann Allen — First Lady of Ann Arbor" following a public reception at which tea, sandwiches, punch and birthday cake will be served.

Reservations, due November 6, at $3.50 per person may be sent to Mrs. Raymond Warzynski, 1520 Martha, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. For more information call 662-6275.

Some readers may recall a picnic on August 16, 1974, celebrating, a year late, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Washtenaw County Pioneer Society in August 1873.

However, a few months later, Wystan Stevens, local historian and curator of Ann Arbor's Kempf House, discovered that *The Michigan Argus* of November 27, 1857, reported a call for a county convention to form a "County Historical Association" on December 17.

John Geddes, one of the earliest settlers in the county, was chairman. In January, Munnis Kenny of Webster Township was elected the first president.

Stevens found newspaper reports of meetings through 1862. After that, the Civil War apparently pre-empted the interest and energies of the people. But in 1873, with the nation's centennial approaching, the society was reorganized as the Washtenaw County Pioneer Society by John Geddes and others. Former Governor Alpheus Felch was elected president.

With the inevitable passing of pioneers, the Society was reorganized in 1929 as the Washtenaw Historical Society.

Dean Bidlack, author of *John Allen and the Founding of Ann Arbor,* has done a lot of research on Allen and his wife, Ann, one of the two Anns for whom Ann Arbor is named. The other was Mary Ann Rumsey, wife of Elisha Walker Rumsey, co-founder of the city in 1824.

A long banner proclaiming "Washtenaw County Historical Society is Washtenaw's Memory", once used in the Society's booth at the old Washtenaw County Fair at what is now Veteran's Park, Ann Arbor, sets the theme and will be displayed.

Esther Warzynski is chairman of the celebration with Carol Freeman co-chairman. The committee also includes Wystan Stevens who will be master of ceremonies; Frances Couch, decorating; and Society officers.

MRS. SHERZER HEADS WCHS MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Kathleen Sherzer is heading the 1983 WCHS membership drive, with Pat Dufek as co-chairman. Letters are to go out soon to members, former members and prospects asking them to join and support the Society's efforts to preserve the county's heritage.

Dues are $8 for an individual, $15 for a couple. Senior citizens are $6 and $12 respectively and an annual sustaining membership is $50. Student dues are $2.

QUOTATION DATED

The quotation about why women work in the September issue was from the March 3, 1882, *Ann Arbor Courier.*

In Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M.

THANKS, JANE

The Society wishes to thank Jane Southwell, a young artist-volunteer, who has contributed her talents on several occasions. Most recently she did a drawing-collage to illustrate the high school brochure and made the posters for the 125th anniversary party.

FARM PLANS OPEN HOUSE

Cobblestone Farm will hold Christmas open house from 12--4 p.m. Sundays, December 5 and 12, at the farm, 2781 Packard Road. The Ann Arbor Chapter of Embroiderers, the YM-YWCA and Scouts will help decorate. Gift shop open.

MUNCYS TO SHOW SLIDES

Ralph and Lydia Muncy will show slides of their research in Scotland and England at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, December 5, at Washtenaw Community College. Class at 1 p.m.

WCHS BROCHURE INVITES HIGH SCHOOL MEMBERS

In connection with President Patricia Austin's project to interest high school students in attending Society meetings and becoming student members, a brochure about WCHS has been prepared by the editor entitled "History Is A Living, Running Stream That Includes You." It will be distributed first at Pioneer High.

'SILENT' PROGRAM SET

Early color films, some hand-painted, will be shown at 7:30 p.m. Monday, December 6, at Weber's Inn by the Ann Arbor Silent Film Society. Guests welcome, $2 donation.

Dues for 1983 will go from $5 to $6 January 1. Until then, new members will also receive a free copy of *Classics of the Silent Screen* by Joe Franklin. The address is P.O Box 2794, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

THE WAY IT WAS IN 1863

Life Beset By War, Spies, Draft, High Prices

It could have been 1863. It was almost as if the more than 100 members and guests at the WCHS September meeting had been dropped onto a Detroit street 119 years ago to overhear a housewife and Union soldier talking.

A couple in costume from the Detroit Historical Society assumed the roles of Mrs. Jane Allen, a housewife and teacher, and Private John F. Caldwell of the 16th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment.

Mrs. Allen was "upset somethin' fierce" about local Copperheads (spies, Southern sympathizers) just having attempted to let loose rebel officers imprisoned near Toledo.

Copperheads from Canada and even some from Detroit had taken over a packet steamer which traveled up and down the river and Lake Erie — the Philo Parsons — but the U.S.S. Michigan, guarding the harbor at Toldeo, foiled them.

"I was thinking about where the men are down there at Ft. Wayne — all the boys from around Michigan," Mrs. Allen said. "I know you're proud of the Guard from Ann Arbor and how they trained up right here but since they've been forming up other regiments they've been training them down there.

"Wasn't President Lincoln proud of that First Michigan Infantry and the State of Michigan for being first to get our troops to Washington?" he asked.

"I think all of us here in the Union were really upset about those rebels thinking they could secede the way they did," she continued.

"That's true," he said, "but the war hasn't gone so well since. We thought the war would be over in three months. Those first Michigan regiments signed up for three months, then they had to sign on again for three years."

"At first there were so many fellows joining up I couldn't even join into a regiment," he continued.

Courtesy of Detroit Historical Society

"Mrs. Allen" and "Private Caldwell" at Detroit's historic Fort Wayne.

"When I come back to Deerfield (Livingston county) from trying to get recruited, Ma, she was acryin'. She thought we'd lose our farm for sure. Now that I've been conscripted, Ma has hired an Irish fella."

"Oh. How much does she have to pay him?"

"A lot. Fifty cents a day plus room and board," he replied.

"Those are high wages. Things have gone up terrible since the war," she said.

As a conscript, Private Caldwell got a $100 bonus — $50 each from state and county. As a volunteer, Mrs. Allen's husband, Samuel, got a $200 bonus.

The listeners learned that Ft. Wayne had been so crowded they had to send men out to Ann Arbor. Ft. Wayne barracks only held a regular company but "they were forming up" a 1,000 men in each the Second Michigan and reorganized First Michigan.

Mrs. Allen thought the Emancipation Proclamation was long overdue. "Over at Jackson, Battle Creek, and Kalamazoo where Sam'l and I come from, there's a lot of folks that are really strong abolitionists."

She had a friend who came to Kalamazoo on the underground railroad from Missouri. "She's in a precarious position with those pesky fugitive slave laws. Most folks in these parts are abolitionists but you never can tell," she said.

"Ms. Allen, you know it was fortunate, the Emancipation Proclamation freed up all the contrabands (runaway slaves) from being held captive by the Union Army and the men employed in that endeavor are loosed to be fighting the rebel hordes," he said.

They pointed out how Black soldiers had to be fierce fighters because the rebels would not hold them prisoner but would kill them. Colored regiments had to pay a bond of $2 to $3 a man to an officer to get him to serve with them.

Private Caldwell got $13 a month. "It's good pay. I send $8 back to my Ma, the rest I keep for luxuries, so I can buy from the sutler when I get a chance. He's the fellow who has a contract with the army."

She told about four Soldiers Aid Societies in Detroit — the first at the Methodist Church on Woodward Avenue.

She told of "Brave Annie" who went to war with her husband to nurse in the hospital but went right out on the battlefield and tore up her apron and cotton goods to bind up wounds. Cotton was scarce in the north and she soon ran out.

Patent medicines were popular with the soldiers. Mrs. Allen's husband asked for a certain kind of "Universal Balm." She said, "I don't understand it but he says you can either drink it or rub it on."

Private Caldwell said he put some Lorenzo's Beef and Iron Tonic right in his canteen with his water in the winter time so the water didn't freeze.

Mrs. Allen passed around a tintype picture of her husband whom she thought looked "peak-ed". Caldwell suggested she send him some tonic.

Photography had advanced so

that pictures didn't have to be made in studios as tintypes were. Mrs. Allen had heard of a fellow named Brady who was traveling around taking pictures of soldiers right on the battlefield.

A photographer had knocked on her door and taken a picture of her little girl with a new-fangled plate and a "contraption" with a long pole that he stood behind the girl's chair and clamped her head into an iron clamp so she wouldn't move too much for the camera.

She was glad she had the picture because Emily died of dysentery. "If we'd had some quinine for her I'm sure we could have pulled her through," she said. Private Caldwell's brother had caught dysentery during his first three months service and couldn't go back.

They talked about riots and breaking windows in Detroit by those opposed to conscription and about how well equipped the Union army was in comparison to the South.

Private Caldwell's uniform included Jefferson boots, wool pants, a four-button blouse and forage cap with a bugle on it.

"I never could figure that out," Mrs. Allen said. "The artillery have cannons and the cavalry sabers. Why a bugle for the infantry?"

He explained how important the bugle calls were in directing daily activities — getting up, going to mess, coming into ranks, roll call. The bugler had a different tune to signal each of them. Buglers and drummer boys, who were supposed to be 16 but often weren't, were paid up to $23 a month.

Caldwell had learned how to march and handle his gun at Ft. Wayne. With a Springfield rifle musket like he used, "a sharpshooter can shoot accurately 900 yards — more than half a mile."

HARDER THAN NAILS

Hardtack was the hard bread issued to Civil War soldiers. Mrs. Allen's husband, Samuel, said they call it hardtack because sometimes the freight nails they use to nail up the crates they ship it in — they'll miss and go into the hardtack.

"He says don't worry if you get a nail in your hardtack. It's probably a soft spot."

It was a muzzle loader like the hunting guns back home, Caldwell said, but it had a percussion lock instead of a flint and steel. "The percussion cap makes the spark when you pull the trigger," Caldwell said, pulling and producing a loud noise.

BITING THE BULLET

Everybody between the ages of 18 and 34 of sound body was eligible for the draft "but if you don't have 27 teeth they don't consider you of sound body so some were pulling out their teeth," Private Caldwell said.

"What does that have to do with whether you can fight?" Mrs. Allen asked.

"Well, you have to be able to open up your ammunition, Ms. Allen."

He showed how to load the gun. "You have cartridges with a miniball inside of it and some gunpowder. You bite on the miniball end of the cartridge and tear the cartridge in half. If your teeth aren't strong enough to tear that paper you might lose a couple teeth."

In drill, he explained, they learned to load and fire kneeling down and flat, shooting on their stomachs and rolling over on their backs to load. He showed how his "socket" bayonet fit on the musket and how, on campaign, the gun with bayonet could be stabbed into the ground for a tentpole.

Allen wrote his wife that there was hardly room for a puppy dog in the tents, let alone two grown men. Caldwell said if they got to stop marching for a few days, especially in winter, they could make the tent warmer and roomier by digging a hole under it.

Caldwell rolled up his frying pan and cooking utensils in his blanket when he went "on campaign". In his haversack he carried his ammunition — cartridge box and cap box, along with rations. They were issued rations of soap, candles, powdered ink, hard bread or hardtack, salt pork and beans.

Caldwell said they went foraging so they didn't have to eat so much of the hardtack. "It's not stale or rotten, but there's no shortening in it." It was made in three-inch squares. A daily pound ration was usually 18 squares.

"If it crumbles, it means there's been weevils chewing it." He advised soaking it in coffee for 15-20 minutes or putting it in stew. "Once you cook it for an hour or so it makes real nice crunchy dumplings."

Mrs. Allen's aid group was going to send a barrel of things to her husband's unit. They planned to put in some potatoes as a change from hardtack. Caldwell suggested they send some onions, too, to help prevent scurvy. Caldwell had received a "housewife" (sewing kit) from the aid society.

He said the only milk they could get was Borden's evaporated milk in tin because most of the cows had been foraged out of Virginia. She had never heard of food in tin. He said it was invented so sailors could have milk and patented in 1856. She was aghast that he had to pay 20 cents for the can "when you can buy a whole bucket of milk for a nickel."

With a shortage of schoolmasters, Mrs. Allen had succeeded in getting a job teaching school near Fort Wayne, even though schoolmasters were considered more effective and schools usually didn't hire married women.

She was paid $12 a month. She didn't board around but stayed with her sister and took a street car down Jefferson Avenue to get to school.

At school, she said, she put on a cap to protect her hair while she started a fire and swept the room. Then she put the day's date on the board and called the class in.

NO MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE

A prospective conscriptee could buy his way out of service by paying someone else to go. Some replacements took the money and disappeared, sometimes going on to another town to take someone else's money, they said. However, the original conscriptee was responsible, and the Provost Marshal came looking for him in that case.

She taught the three "R's" — readin', writin' and 'rithmetic plus spelling, history, geography and penmanship. "We spend a great deal of time on penmanship," she said. She used the old Webster's speller which had sold more than a million copies since it came out 20 years before.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS: OF TOYS, SLEIGHS, BUILDINGS AND A 150TH BIRTHDAY

Chelsea Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. second Monday of month at McKune Memorial Library, 221 South Main Street. Election of officers in November. No meeting in December.

Dexter Historical Society — Regular meetings November, and January on first Thursday of month, beginning with refreshments at 7:30 at museum, 3443 Inverness.

December events at the museum include family potluck dinner and tree-trimming 6:30 p.m. the 2nd; annual Christmas bazaar, 9—4 p.m. Saturday, the 4th; and annual Christmas Sing at 7 p.m. Saturday the 18th with "Fat Bob" Taylor.

Manchester Historical Society — 8 p.m. third Monday at the Old Blacksmith Shop, 324 East Main Street. "Toys Past & Present" exhibit co-sponsored by Art Guild at shop through November 14, plus toy making classes and handcrafted toys for sale. Exhibit hours, 1—4 p.m. Thursday through Sunday plus extra hours Saturday 10—noon and 6—8 p.m. or for appointment call 428-7664, 428-8658 or 456-7821.

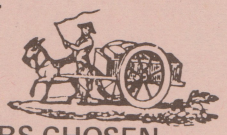
Milan Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday at Hack House, 775 County Street. Gerald Linderman, U-M professor of history, will speak November 17 on "Small Towns 100 Years Ago."

Northfield Historical Society — Planning to celebrate 150th anniversary of the township in 1983. Meets 7:30 p.m. fourth Tuesday at Township Fire Hall. For More information call 449-2991.

Webster Historical Society — 7:45 p.m. first Monday at member homes. November 1, Paul Kleinschmidts, 5922 Webster Church Road. December 6, sleigh ride at Cottonwood Farm, 4580 Farrell Road. January 3, annual meeting, place to be announced. For more information call 426-4839 or 426-5115.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — Museum at 220 North Huron Street to be decked out Victorian style for Christmas public open house 2—5 p.m. Sunday, December 12. Music, refreshments. Antique dolls from Gilbert House residents on display December and January. Museum hours, Friday—Sunday, 2—4 p.m.

Annual dinner, 5 p.m. Sunday, November 14, at Masonic Temple, 76 North Huron Street. Robert A. Schweitzer, EMU historic preservation teacher, speaking on "How Ypsilanti's Architecture Fits Into The 19th Century Scene." Reservations, $5 each, due November 8, to museum.



OFFICERS CHOSEN

Myrta Larson was recently elected president of the Northfield Township Historical Society. Michael Krebill is vice-president, Malcolm Ratcliff, secretary, and Emma Mason, treasurer. Mason and Ratcliff are new board members while Krebill, Tom O'Brien and Mrs. Rusty Towers were re-elected.

CIRCLE FEBRUARY 13

The next WCHS meeting will be Sunday, February 13, 1983, place and program to be announced later.

SOCIETY PICKS SWAINSON

Former Governor John Swainson has been elected president of the Manchester Historical Society. Mrs. Lewis Kellum of Tipton and Mrs. Alvin Kappler are first and second vice-presidents. Mrs. John Sauter is secretary and Mrs. Jesse (Hazel) Walker, treasurer, Mrs. Franklin Reck is publicity chairman.

ON BEING 'ABOVE 18'

"I hear some of those young folks is so anxious to get into the war, they're not even 18 and they write the number '18' on a slip of paper and put it in their shoe so they can swear that they're above 18," Caldwell said.

"MAKES HIM NERVOUS

"I simply cannot stand the toot of a Ford horn."

"Why not?"

"A fellow whom I hired as chauffeur stole my Ford and eloped with my wife. Now every time I hear a horn toot I think he is bringing her back."

From "Ford Smiles: All the Best Current Jokes About A Rattling Good Car," by Carleton B. Case, Shrewesbury Publishing Company, Chicago, 1917.

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